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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: PHUM PREL KCRM GR TIP

SUBJECT: NGOS LOOK FOR MORE COOPERATION ON TIP, GOG ADMITS MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE

REF: A. ATHENS 621

B. ATHENS 1577

C. ATHENS 1044

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12. (U) SUMMARY: During May 23-25 meetings with visiting Foreign Affairs Officer for Southeastern Europe, Suzanne Yountchi, officials from the Ministries of Health (MOH), Justice (MOJ), Public Order (MPO), Foreign Affairs (MFA), and IOM discussed their efforts to protect victims of trafficking and prevent and prosecute trafficking in persons (TIP). Though GoG efforts to fight TIP are on-going and even increasing, the meetings exposed some weaknesses in the GoG system which stem from not enough training, an ever-changing TIP problem, and inadequate NGO involvement in the process. Representatives of eight NGOs pleaded for increased cooperation with police and an institutionalized role in the overall TIP framework. See action items for NGOs and GoG in para 10. Note: These discussions took place before the release of the 2005 TIP report. END SUMMARY.

NGOs Describe Lack of Coordination

13. (SBU) During NGO meetings, the common theme was that the role of NGOs had to be institutionalized. Reps from the Doctors of the World (MdM) shelter stated that they have no cooperation with police, so potential victims of trafficking (VOTs) are brought in by street workers. There were 11 adults and 3 children from Africa and the former Soviet Union being hosted at the MdM shelter when we visited. A rep from privately-funded Nea Zoi, a team of American Protestant missionaries that does street work to try to "reform" prostitutes, admitted she was unaware of what advice to give prostitutes identified as VOTs and appealed for guidance. She also remarked that after six years on the streets, she is witnessing increasing numbers of African prostitutes unwilling to speak to NGOs, possibly because of "voodoo curses" that make victims fear for their families if they betray their traffickers, and increasing numbers of young Greek men using prostitutes. Aside from general criticism of the police and justice system and describing allegations of corruption at Greek consulates, the Greek Helsinki Monitor spokesman told us that there were convictions under the anti-trafficking law as early as 2003, and a major trafficker was imprisoned in December 2004 (facts that had not reached the Embassy).

14. (U) Members of the European Network of Women described their shelters, helpline, public awareness campaign, and legal services. Both their 30 second TIP TV ad, currently showing on eight stations, and their TIP leaflet use seven languages (Greek, English, Albanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Romanian). Their paid helpline staff undergo at least 50 hours of training before answering the phone lines, and they have speakers of each of the seven languages via a mobile phone-relay available during the helpline hours, 9 AM - 9 PM. (They are seeking funds to operate the helpline 24 hours.) The Network also has professionals who volunteer to provide psychological and legal assistance to victims. The main problems they have experienced are that some police not yet ready to accept the idea that VOTs can have legal visas, and that the GoG will not accept a victim unless she is willing to see the prosecutor the following day. All the NGOs reported excellent cooperation with the "special prosecutor", but worry about taking victims to other prosecutors who may not be trained about TIP but are still responsible for granting victim status.

15. (SBU) During a DVC with GoG-funded Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture and Other Forms of Abuse (CRTV) and the Consul General from Thessaloniki, the psychiatrist-director of CRTV agreed that police and prosecutors only recognize victims who agree to testify, and that a formal agreement is necessary to restart police-NGO cooperation. CRTV operates its own shelter, and complained that the GoG has created parallel structures through State TIP shelters where staff have not volunteered to work with VOTs and are not properly trained in handling post-traumatic stress. The CRTV head and his legal advisor agreed that

there is no good coordination between the GoG and NGOs and that NGOs are competing with one another for MFA funding, creating potential problems in future cooperation. Finally, CRTV commented on the lack of coordination between local police precincts, who may be inexperienced in handling TIP cases, and the specialized anti-TIP police units. He also pointed out that local police units are not required to refer TIP cases to the special units, which leads to mishandling of cases.

#### Room for Improvement at GoG Helpline and Shelters

16. (SBU) A meeting with the head of the MOH's EKAKV, the National Center for Urgent Social Aid, which operates the State shelters and GoG 24-hour "SOS line" showed some weaknesses in the current system. Though EKAKV uses its multilingual social workers to staff the helpline (in Greek and English, with some French and minimal Russian), it handles and promotes its line for a variety of domestic problems, such as elder-abuse, domestic violence, and runaways, as well as TIP. Upcoming radio and television public awareness campaigns for EKAKV and the helpline are planned to be in Greek. The EKAKV director reported that the 14 VOTs the State shelter has hosted were all referred by the police, likely as a result of the 30,000 EKAKV brochures that have been distributed to local authorities. The director reported that the helpline is receiving very few TIP-related calls (ref a). Reflecting general public opinion and the gray areas of TIP as more VOTs have relative "freedom" and earn nominal amounts of money, the EKAKV director commented that he "doesn't believe there are many trafficking victims in Greece." Rather, he continued, most sex-workers come voluntarily to Greece to earn money. Social workers at EKAKV appealed to poloff privately that they are being asked to handle TIP in addition to their regular social work without extensive training.

#### Justice Ministry Acknowledges "More Can Be Done"

17. (U) Athens' Chief Prosecutor and special TIP prosecutor noted right off that "more can be done" on TIP, but that they are optimistic about next steps, especially the upcoming immigration bill (drafts or which are floating around Athens but nothing has been presented to Parliament) which will include new TIP provisions. The special prosecutor reiterated major problems include insufficient preliminary work done by police in preparing the briefs (ref b), and inadequate human resources to focus on TIP. She claimed, however, that the police are eager to help in the TIP fight and her office has submitted a request to the MPO Secretary General to provide police more resources to do better groundwork. She noted that another problem has been building trust and getting victims to talk to prosecutors, even when there is embassy and NGO involvement, and hoped the introduction of a reflection period would ease this challenge. The Chief Prosecutor explained that more "special prosecutors" may be identified, but that training for all prosecutors is ongoing. (A IOM-sponsored training for 300 MPO and MOJ officials will occur June 11-12 in Corfu.) The Justice Ministry's Secretary General, who is head of the inter-ministerial TIP council, reported trying to establish a system to follow convictions, discussed being open to NGO involvement in the process of granting victim status, and agreed to explore having the specialized anti-TIP police at least advise, if not take over, every identified case of TIP.

#### Example of Failed NGO-GoG Cooperation

18. (SBU) An activist NGO lawyer from Act Up reported to emboffs that, with the knowledge of the special prosecutor, she tried to take two potential African TIP victims to the State shelter but they were turned away as economic migrants, in the opinion of the NGO lawyer, "because they were black." No other information was provided by the NGO. In separate meetings, the Secretaries General of Justice and Health and the EKAKV director each relayed the GoG version of the same instance of failed GoG-NGO cooperation. The NGO called EKAKV on a Friday asking if over a dozen TIP victims identified on the street could be sheltered at the state shelter. EKAKV agreed, called in extra staff, and prepared food and rooms at their large shelter. On Saturday the NGO called again, saying due to lack of transportation, it would bring the victims on Sunday, although now there were only nine. EKAKV workers offered transportation, which was refused, and readied for the victims to arrive Sunday. Finally on Monday, the NGO brought just two women. EKAKV refused to allow the women to come and go as they pleased, but insisted on protecting them within the shelter. The women refused the terms of stay because they had (illegal) jobs packaging pirated CDs, so they left. The GoG interpreted the event as a possible effort by NGOs to abuse the TIP law to obtain victim status (and eventually residence permits) for illegal migrants.

19. (SBU) Post realizes that these women were two of the

dozens that had been sheltered at the MdM shelter since March (ref c) who were never taken to the prosecutor for victim characterization, and instead were offered a "default" reflection period at the NGO shelter without any GoG involvement. When the women were ready to speak to prosecutors and authorities, the authorities were not informed that the victims had been sheltered for months and were already reintegrating. Feeding the GoG's mistrust was the "changing" number of victims, not realizing all the women were being sheltered with an NGO. While it is still unclear whether the women were victims of trafficking, the story is an example of how the antagonistic relationship between some NGOs and the GoG is resulting in poor care for victims. Moreover, the NGO wanted to set the GoG up for failure; an NGO rep told poloff that he would "prove that the State shelters don't work." At the same time, the GoG has little experience with anything but "traditional" Eastern European victims of TIP, which is often referred to as "white-flesh trafficking" in Greek.

10. (SBU) COMMENT: Post used Yountchi's visit, in advance of the 2005 TIP Report release, to give the GoG and NGOs a chance to discuss their plans for the year ahead. Based on the points raised in the discussions, below are summarized action items for both the GoG and NGOs.

- NGOs and GoG should agree on a system of victim screening and referral.

- The identification of victims should take into account all information from police, NGOs, IOM, and the prosecutor, where available (and therefore, these institutions need to cooperate closely.) Victim characterization should not be dependent upon victim's testimony as a witness.

- NGOs should formally assess their capabilities in order to illuminate the range of referral options available to victims and to improve transparency between NGOs.

- GOG should instigate a reflection period, (as outlined in EU Council Directive 2004/81/EC) during which "potential victim" status can be granted and victim is not obligated to speak to authorities.

- Police, prosecutors, and judges should continue to offer and participate in TIP training, to include changing circumstances of TIP, victims with legal documents, victims who can not self-identify, men and child victims, victims from outside Europe, and people who became victims after their consensual migration.

- NGO and GoG shelters should regularly share information on their resources to avoid duplication and ensure the best protection, treatment and assistance is offered to victims, and that all staff are appropriately trained.

- The special anti-TIP police task forces should play at least an advisory role in all TIP cases.

- A large-scale prevention campaign, focusing on demand, should be initiated.

- Information campaigns for victims, including information on helplines, should be multilingual in the languages of most victims. Helpline operators should be fluent in the languages of most victims.

The MFA remains our primary TIP interlocutor with the GoG and the GoG's primary intermediary with NGOs. We will continue to discuss with them how to smooth over the rough spots in order to see these proposals realized. END COMMENT.  
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